Kashimashi 5

The Can't-Miss Conclusion To The Hit Gender-Bending Comedy!

Just a few months ago, Hazumu's life changed forever. Now, even stronger winds of change blow upon our former male hero. In this heart-wrenching final volume of the series, the chaotic all-girl love triangle comes to a shocking resolution in the face of Hazumu's biggest challenge yet... her own mortality.

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STRAWBERRY

MANGA

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Scenario: Satoru Akahori Comic: Yukimaru Katsura
Original Character Design: Sokuno Inugami
School Uniform Design: COSPA inc.

#29 In the Bath Water

NO, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! I'LL GO GET IT! JUST GET IN THE BATH!
WHAT?! YOU LEFT IT OUTSIDE?!!
SHOVE
OH! WHERE DID YOU PUT YOUR BAG?
WAIT RIGHT THERE, THE TUB WILL BE FULL IN A MINUTE!
PUT YOUR WET CLOTHES IN HERE, OKAY?
ピッ
PWSH
トロ
SPLASH チョンッ
UHM...
Huh?
AH!
I GUESS I HAVE BEEN WOUND TIGHT FOR MOST OF THE DA--
Oh, cool! Panel-controlled electronic heating...
Hey!
ALL THE TENSION JUST RAN OUT OF MY BODY...
ACK!
GEEZ...

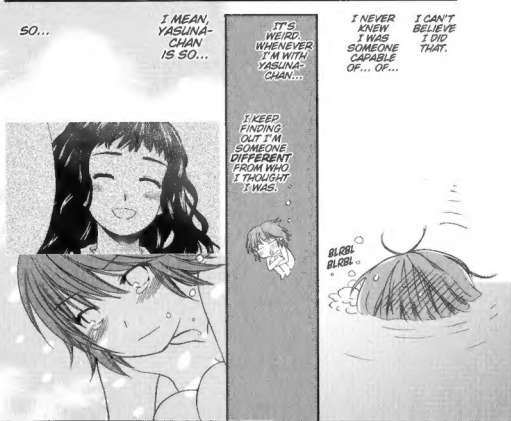
HAZU-MU-KUN...
AH--
YOU'LL CATCH COLD STANDING OUT HERE, DRENCHED LIKE THAT! COME WITH ME! HURRY!!
OH NO!
WHA ...?
Y-YASUNA-CHAN!
KURUNCH
CHOO!!!
AREN'T HOME RIGHT NOW! IT'S OKAY, I PROMISE!
I DON'T WANT TO JUST BARGE IN! YOUR PARENTS--
W-WAIT!
HUH?

I'LL BE WAITING--
LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED.
I BROUGHT YOU A TOWEL AND SOME DRY CLOTHES...
I'LL PUT THEM RIGHT HERE, OKAY?
HAZUMU-KUN?
Y-YES?!
WHOOSH
AREN'T YOU GOING TO GET IN TOO?
AH! YASUNA-CHAN!

ACK!!!
.....
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT!!
I WASN'T ASKING IF YOU WANTED TO... UH... GET IN... AH... WITH ME OR ANYTHING, I SWEAR!!

YOU JUST WORRY ABOUT WARMING YOURSELF UP, OKAY?
O-OH...
OKAY...
I'LL HAVE MY SOAK LATER.
IT'S ALL RIGHT...
hee hee
I-I JUST... Y'KNOW... WELL... UM... YOU WERE AS SOAKED AS I WAS AND ALL, SO I KNOW YOU'VE GOTTA BE FREEZING, AND I DON'T WANNA HOG THE TUB IF YOU'RE REALLY WANTING TO GET IN, AND... AND...
SCRUNCH

NO WAY!!
SPLOOSH


SO...
I MEAN, YASUNA-CHAN IS SO...
IT'S WEIRD WHENEVER I'M WITH YASUNA-CHAN...
I KEEP FINDING OUT I'M SOMEONE DIFFERENT FROM WHO I THOUGHT I WAS.
I NEVER KNEW I WAS SOMEONE CAPABLE OF... OF...
I CAN'T BELIEVE I DID THAT.
BLRBL BLRBL

AH.
WELCOME BACK.
I... UM... I STARTED ON THE TEA ALREADY. I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND.
THANK YOU.
KA-CHUNK
CLUNK
.....
I... FEEL KINDA GUILTY, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF YOUR HOSPITALITY LIKE THIS. I MEAN, THE BATH... THE TEA...
EVEN LETTING ME BORROW YOUR CLOTHES...
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, HAZUKI-KUN. I DON'T MIND. REALLY.
THOUGH, I'M AFRAID THERE ISN'T ANY-THING I CAN DO ABOUT THE BRA NOT FITTING. I'M SORRY...
ACK! NO! NO! IT'S FINE! REALLY! BETTER THAN NOTHING, RIGHT?
BESIDES... THIS IS ALL MY FAULT...
MY FAULT THAT THINGS GOT ALL...
WEIRD.
Maybe I should make some tea...
BOOM
IT'S SO STRANGE...
BI-ZARRE...
TOTTER
TOTTER
IT'S NOT LIKE IT WASN'T SOME-THING WE'VE DONE BEFORE...
WEIRD.

SEE YOU TOMORROW.
YES?
YOU'RE WELCOME. AND, HAZUMU-KUN?
I WILL. THANKS.
I WOULD BRUSH YOUR UNIFORM ONCE IT DRIES, THOUGH. IT WILL PROBABLY NEED IT...
SURE. SEE YOU TOMORROW.
TALKING WITH YASUNA-CHAN NOWADAYS IS... I DUNNO... LIKE... LIKE...
YEAH...
.....
.....

I DON'T REGRET IT AT ALL!
NO DOUBT!
HM?
DO YOU REGRET IT?
WHAT? NO! I DON'T REGRET IT, I SWEAR!
.....
OH...
AH!
BLUSH
I'M GLAD.
HM?
DID SHE JUST...?
THANKS FOR LETTING ME BORROW THIS DRESS. I'LL GIVE IT BACK TOMORROW, KAY?
OKAY.

SO WE REALLY DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE BUT TO--
NO WAY!!
WE WERE BOTH SOAKING WET, AND IT WAS GETTING DARK AND COLD...
ACK!! NO!!! IT WASN'T LIKE THAT!
I can't believe it!
OMGOD!
YOU TOOK A BATH AT A GIRL'S HOUSE?!
YOU TOOK A BATH TOGETHER?!
How could you?!
WHA?!
NO, WAIT!!
MY, YOU'RE TURNING QUITE RED.
HAZUMU!!
GUYS!! STOP IT! THAT'S NOT WHAT--
SHAKE
SHAKE
Mother, Father! Hazumu's taking a step forward! adult-hood!
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG ABOUT TWO GIRLS BATHING TOGETHER, HAZUMU-KUN. IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME.
C'MERE! NOW!!
WHA ...?
TOMARI-CHAN?

THERE YOU ARE!
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU GOT BACK, HAZUMU!
!
NEXT TIME YOU'RE GOING TO BE OUT LATE, AT LEAST TELL SOMEONE!
OH, OOPS! SORRY!
Your parents worried themselves sick!
BUT WHY DIDN'T YOU CALL ME? MY CELL PHONE IS...
SOAKED!! ACK!!!
DROWNED.
DROWNED?
YOUR CLOTHES?
'POINT
AT THAT MOMENT, YASUNA IS...
Why is it not connecting?
I SEE, THEY'RE YASUNA'S. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR UNIFORM?
OH, UM... WELL....
Y'SEE, I KINDA GOT DRENCHED ON THE WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL, AND YASUNA-CHAN DIDN'T WANT ME GETTING SICK, SO SHE INVITED ME OVER TO HER HOUSE, AND I... UM...
BLUSH
I TOOK A BATH THERE...

SPLORT
HAZUMU...
ACK!
UM...
U-HA...
T-T-TOMARI-CHAN!! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!!
YOU TOOK A BATH TOGETHER WITH YASUNA, RIGHT...?
NO! WE DIDN'T!!
SO, AH, I...
UM...
WE BOTH TOOK ONE, BUT WE DID IT SEPARATELY! NOT TOGETHER!!
I SWEAR!
AGUTA GOT THE TOTALLY WRONG IDEA. THAT'S ALL! I DIDN'T TAKE A BATH WITH YASUNA-CHAN!
HUH ...?
AH...
OKAY...
OH...
HM?

TAKE A BATH HERE TOO!!!
HUH?!
AHHH!
SHOVE
TMP TMP TMP TMP TMP TMP
ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS ADULT-HOOD, PERHAPS.
WHAT THE HELL ...?
Whoa! Some glasses!
They're so easy to understand!

!?
BTAM

TOMARI-CHAN AND I USED TO TAKE BATHS TOGETHER ALL THE TIME WHEN WE WERE LITTLE.
MAN, I CAN FEEL THE MEMORIES COMING BACK...
EHEH... HEH... HEH...

AN-OTHER ONE WON'T KILL ME...
WELL... TOMARI-CHAN DID DRAG ME ALL THE WAY HERE AT A DEAD RUN, SO I GOT A LITTLE SWEATY.
UMM...
?
!?
?!

IT'S MY FAULT FOR NOT CALLING, MAKING YOU WORRY---
THAT'S OKAY, TOMARI-CHAN.
NO! IT IS MY FAULT.
I HEARD ONE LITTLE THING, AND MY MIND JUST BLEW IT TOTALLY OUT OF PROPORTION.
I GOT SO JEAL-OUS...
AND THAT MADE ME DO SOME REALLY STUPID STUFF. I'M SORRY...
IT'S MY FAULT BECAUSE THIS MEANS THAT...
I STILL DON'T TRUST YASU-NA...
OR YOU...
IT'S BEEN THAT WAY FROM THE BEGINNING
I PUT UP A GOOD FRONT, PRETENDING I'M OVER IT AND ALL...
BUT WHEN I KNOW YOU TWO ARE OFF SOMEWHERE ALONE TOGETHER, I GET SO WORRIED AND ANXIOUS, IT DRIVES ME NUTS!
!

TOMARI-CHAN!!
SLAM
BUUUUUSH!!
あばばば
TOMARI-CHAN?
nok nok
MIND IF I COME IN?
DON'T TOUCH THE LIGHTS!!
LEAVE 'EM OFF...
GOD... I FEEL SO EMBAR-RASSED...
SO STUPID...
I WANNA CRAWL IN A HOLE AND JUST DIE.

HEY! THAT WAS WHEN WE WERE LITTLE!!
IDIOT...
WHEN A REAL ONE SUDDENLY SHOWED UP, IT WAS THE MOST UNFAIR THING IN THE WORLD TO ME.
THEN...
I'M AN ONEECHAN NOW!
LOOK! LOOK!
I'VE FOLLOWED HER EVERYWHERE FOR AS LONG AS I'VE KNOWN HER, ALWAYS JUST ONE STEP BEHIND.
WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR A REALLY LONG TIME, TOMARI-CHAN...
OF THE TWO OF US, TOMARI-CHAN IS OLDER BY HALF A YEAR.
I THINK I KNOW YOU PRETTY WELL, AND YOU SHOULD KNOW ME JUST AS GOOD.
SO I'M NOT GOING TO SAY STUFF LIKE THAT, OKAY...?
OKAY...

MY DUMMY OF A LITTLE BROTHER GOT THAT ON HIS SCHOOL TRIP...
HELL NO!!
ARE YOU USING IT?
AN' HE GAVE IT TO ME AS A PRESENT.
OH, HEY!
I SPY A BOKKEN!
.....
AH, YOUR LITTLE BROTHER, HUH?
Y'KNOW...
HE AND I NEVER DID GET ALONG WELL.
I HAD ALWAYS THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER.
WELL...
UM...
HEY, NOW THAT YOU MEN-TION IT...
YOU'RE RIGHT. WHY IS THAT?

YASUNA-CHAN.
SHE WAS THE GIRL WHO TAUGHT ME HOW TO LOVE.
EVERY TIME I SEE HER, TOUCH HER, STRANGE FEELINGS START STIRRING UP INSIDE ME.
THE SIGHT OF HER SMALL BACK HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SOURCE OF RELIEF AND SECURITY FOR ME...
JUST LIKE A WARM, SOFT BLANKET.
THE ONE PERSON I'VE SPENT MORE TIME WITH THAN EVEN MY OWN PARENTS. SHE'S CLOSER TO ME THAN MY OWN FAMILY.
TOMARI-CHAN.

OH, HEY...
YOU TALKED WITH YASUNA TODAY, RIGHT?
WHAT'D SHE SAY?
YOU DID REMEMBER TO ASK HER RIGHT...?
OH, YEAH!
EVERY-THING'S GOING TO BE FINE.
SHE SAID SHE WASN'T GOING TO GO TO NEW YORK.
IT WAS ALL JUST A RUMOR THAT GOT OUT OF HAND.

OH, I SEE..
THAT'S GOOD...

#30 On the Eve of the Culture Festival

THAT WOULD MAKE ME THE WORST FRIEND EVER.
I ALMOST LEFT THEM—RAN AWAY FROM THEM—WITHOUT DOING ONE SINGLE THING FOR, IN FACT.
LOOKING BACK NOW, I REALIZE I'D STARTED TO TAKE THEIR FEELINGS FOR ME FOR GRANTED, INDULGING IN THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF MY INDECISION.
I NEED TO GIVE THEM AN ANSWER.
BEFORE EVERYTHING IS OVER.
I NEED TO GIVE THEM AN ANSWER SOON.

WHAT CAN I DO THAT'S THE BEST FOR THE BOTH OF THEM?

HOW CAN I ANSWER THEIR FEELINGS FOR ME?

IT WAS SO MUCH EASIER, SPENDING EVERY DAY BEING BOUNCY AND CHEERFUL

?

THAT WAY, I DIDN'T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT'S COMING..

HEY, HAZUMU!

HAZUMU?

Hazumu!

Hazumu!

NOW I DO HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT.

BUT NOW...

Hmm...
WELL, DETERMINING IT DOWN TO THE PRECISE NANOSECOND WOULD BE DIFFICULT...
EXACTLY HOW MUCH TIME?
YEAH!
ANYWAY... CAN YOU GET A BETTER IDEA OF EXACTLY HOW MUCH TIME I HAVE LEFT?
BUT PERMIT ME TO RUN THE EXPERIMENT A SECOND TIME, AND WE SHALL SEE WHAT RESULTS WE GET.

THE DATA WILL TAKE A DAY OR TWO TO ANALYZE. I WILL INFORM YOU THEN.
THANK YOU.

HM...?
BY THE WAY, HAVE YOU DETERMINED WITH MACOM YOU SHALL SPEND YOUR LAST HOURS?

MY LAST HOURS... I...

AH! ALIEN-SAN?
ALIEN-SAN, HELLO?

HMM....

DON'T GO JUMPING OUT OF CRAZY PLACES LIKE THAT!!
WHY EVER NOT?
AHH!!!
YOU CALLED FOR ME?

ARGH!! WHAT IS UP WITH THOSE THREE?!
IT'S DRIVING ME NUTS, YOU HEAR!! NUTS!!!
HAZUMU'S TOTALLY LOST IN HER OWN WORLD, THINKING ABOUT GOD KNOWS WHAT!
TOMARI DOESN'T HAVE A QUARTER OF HER USUAL ENERGY!
AND KAMIZUMI IS WALKING AROUND LIKE SHE'S IN SOME SORT OF DAZE ALL THE TIME!
BUT IF YOU HADN'T...
DON'T
PON
"BUT IF I HADN'T..." WHAT? SPILL IT.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
Y'KNOW...
YOU TOLD ME TO KEEP QUIET, SO I'M KEEPING QUIET.
WHA?!
STRANGE, HOW SMALL THE THOUGHTS OF SOME PEOPLE CAN BE...

WAIT A MOMENT!
THESE TOO.
SHFFL
SHFFL SHFFL
SHHHHGH
HM?
BTM

TOMARI-CHAN...!!
AHH! You look so cute!!
HMM, PERHAPS I SHOULD E-MAIL A PICTURE OF THIS TO HAZUMU-KUN
F-FINE! WHAT-EVER!
OH! FLYERS FOR THE ENSEMBLE?
WHAT TIME DOES THE CONCERT START?
IT SHOULD START AT 1 P.M.
NOT LISTENING
WELL, MY CLUB WILL BE--
IT SEEMS SO. I THINK THEY WILL BE HOLDING SOME GARDENING WORKSHOPS AS WELL.
OH! I'm so sorry!
THE GARDENING CLUB'LL BE SELLING FLOWERS AND VEGGIES THIS YEAR TOO, RIGHT?

SNEAK
AH.
Ugh...
AYUKI! ASUTA!
OH MY GOD, TOMARI?

And to become a perfect 10, I see who could snap the most pictures!
Come take one too!
SNAP SNAP SNAP!!!

Hey, why don't we use the digital camera to take a picture of us?
What a nice idea!

Let's take a picture for pottery!
HEY! I TOLD YOU TWO TO QUIT IT WITH THE DUMB FLOWERS!!
Eep?! They're laughing at me!
TOMARI! HOLD STILL! YOU'RE RUINING THE FLOWERS!

BUT NOW...!!
SKCH
I HAD ALL THAT TIME...
SKCH
HOW COME I DIDN'T REALIZE THIS SOONER...?
SKCH
YOU GOING TO THE FESTIVAL EVE BASH TONIGHT?
NO... I CAN'T. I STILL NEED TO HELP OUT AT ENSEMBLE.
I SEE. SOMEONE WILL BE STAYING HERE THE NIGHT, THEN.
I MEAN, THE TEAM'S HARDLY GOTTEN ANYTHING DONE.
AH. I CAN'T GO EITHER.

HAZUKI, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT TAKING AN OVERSEAS VACATION THIS NEW YEAR?
So we're going to have to be here really early tomorrow morning
WHAT?
IT WOULDN'T BE RIGHT FOR ME TO BE THE ONLY ONE WHO GETS TO SPEND MY LAST FEW DAYS WITHOUT ANY REGRETS...
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO TAKE A TRIP OVERSEAS WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY!
Right, Mom?
You bet, Dad!
OR WHAT ABOUT AUSTRALIA? CAN'T FORGET ABOUT THAT ONE!
WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO? HAWAII? GUAM? SAIPAN, MAYBE?
See? I've got tons of brochures...

SHE ALWAYS NOTICES WHEN SOMEONE NEEDS HER...
AND SHE GOES STRAIGHT TO THEIR SIDE.
ARE ALL THAT IT TAKES TO KEEP YO... ALIVE...
BUT I STILL BELIEVE IN HER.
HAZUMU-KUN IS NOT THE KIND OF PERSON WHO CAN LEAVE BEHIND SOMEONE SHE CARES ABOUT.
I'M NOT SURE...
DO YOU THINK IT'LL WORK...?
HOWEVER, WE CAN TRY TO MAKE HER TURN AROUND AND LOOK AT US... TO THINK ABOUT US.
EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON HER HEART. THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO TO CHANGE THAT...
WHAT WILL HAZUMU-KUN BE DOING TONIGHT? I WONDER...

THIS TIME, LET US GIVE IT TO YOU...
THE ONE PERSON MOST IMPORTANT TO HER WILL COME RIGHT TO MIND.
IF THE FEELINGS SHE'S HAD FOR US ALL ALONG HAVE BEEN "THE REAL THING"...
THEN I'M SURE WHEN THE TIME COMES...
"PRECIOUS LOVE"
"KINDLY LOVE"
HM...?

NOT ONLY WILL HE DIE, BUT YOU WILL AS WELL.
SHOULD YOUR WISH TO BE TOGETHER EVER LOSE ITS PURITY, AND YOUR HEARTS DIVERGE..
ONE MORE THING YOU MUST REALIZE TO TRANSPLANT YOUR "FATE GRAINS" AND SHARE YOUR FATE WITH HIM. MEANS THAT
ARE YOU CERTAIN THIS COURSE OF ACTION IS WORTH THE RISK?
DO NOT CHOOSE HASTILY. WHILE YOU YET LIVE, FINDING A NEW LOVE REMAINS A VIABLE OPTION.
THEN OUR DECISION IS SIMPLICITY ITSELF.
YES.
YEAH... BUT IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAVE ANY CHOICE IN THE MATTER...
I WISH HER DECISION DIDN'T HAVE TO BE FORCED LIKE THIS...

BLUSH
BLUSH
BLUSH
BLUSH
BLUSH
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO GIVE IKEBANA A TRY, SO I FIDDLED AROUND WITH IT ON SOME BOUQUETS.
YOU CAN HAVE THIS ONE. IT'D LOOK PRETTY NEAT IN THE MUSIC ROOM, I THINK.
It's pretty good, don't you think?
I'll be selling ones like these tomorrow
O-OH... AHEM... TH-THANK YOU. IT'S LOVELY.
SURE...
UM, NO... NOT REALLY...
OH, GOODNESS, I'M SO SORRY! I-I MUST BE ACTING SO STRANGE RIGHT NOW!
YES .. YES, I AM ACTING STRANGE.
I SUDDENLY CAN'T DO THINGS I USED TO BE ABLE TO DO...

OH! HI, YASUNA-CHAN.
TAKING A BREAK?
YEAH.
I HEARD YOU PRACTICING A MINUTE AGO. IT SOUNDED PERFECT!
THANK YOU. SO WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
OH, THIS?
WE'RE GOING TO BE SELLING MINI-BOUQUETS TOMORROW, SO I'M PRACTICING WRAPPING THEM.
My pencil-box is the bouquet and the handkerchief the wrapper, see?
HERE YOU GO!
OH, HEY! I KNOW!
HANG ON A SECOND...

ISN'T A TINY BOUQUET.
RIGHT NOW, AT THIS MOMENT, THE LOVE I FEEL FOR YOU...
WHAT HAZUMU-KUN HAS GIVEN ME...
BLOOMING IN WHAT USED TO BE A BARREN HEART.
IT'S STRONGER THAN ANYTHING I'VE EVER FELT BEFORE.
IT'S A GIANT FIELD OF FLOWERS...

...AND I CAN DO THINGS I USED TO BE UNABLE TO.
I MEAN, I NEVER USED TO BE SO, AH... MOVED BY SUCH LITTLE THINGS...
BEFORE.
YEAH...
I UNDER-STAND WHAT YOU MEAN.
HAZUMU-KUN...
I LOVE YOU.

TOMARI-CHA--
LOOK OUT!!!
ACK!!
WHUD
OWWW...
OOF!
HEY..
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...?

HAZUMU!
HM...? AH.
TOMARI-CHAN...
YEAH...
AH.
GOING SHOPPING?
HUH...?
TMP

AS LONG AS HAZUMU SEES ME AS WHO I TRULY AM.
I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND...
NOT AS A LITTLE BROTHER, THOUGH.
I DON'T REALLY MIND ANYMORE
I LOVE YOU, BECAUSE YOU'RE YOU.
RESET IT FROM THE BEGINNING.
LET'S END OUR RELATIONSHIP HERE, HAZUMU, AND RESTART IT.

I THOUGHT THERE WASN'T ANY WAY I COULD EVER BECOME THE "PRINCESS"...
AROUND AND AROUND, WE'D GO. SOMEWHERE IN THERE, I REALIZED THAT I COULD PROTECT YOU, SO I STARTED FEELING LIKE IT WAS MY DUTY TO PROTECT YOU...
THEN I'D SEE YOU WERE HURT, SO I'D TURN AROUND AND TRY TO PROTECT YOU...
HEH. YOU KNOW, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS, HASN'T IT, HAZUMU?
LIKE THAT WAS THE WAY THINGS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE.
WHENEVER THERE WAS TROUBLE, YOU'D ALWAYS JUMP IN AND TRY TO PROTECT ME, GETTING HURT IN THE PROCESS.
BUT NOW I'VE HAD ENOUGH. WE NEED TO STOP ACTING.
THEN I COULD STAY WITH YOU!
I'VE PLAYED THAT ROLE THIS WHOLE TIME, HAZUMU...
SO I FIGURED THAT IF I BECAME THE "PRINCE"...
HAZUMU... I LOVE YOU.

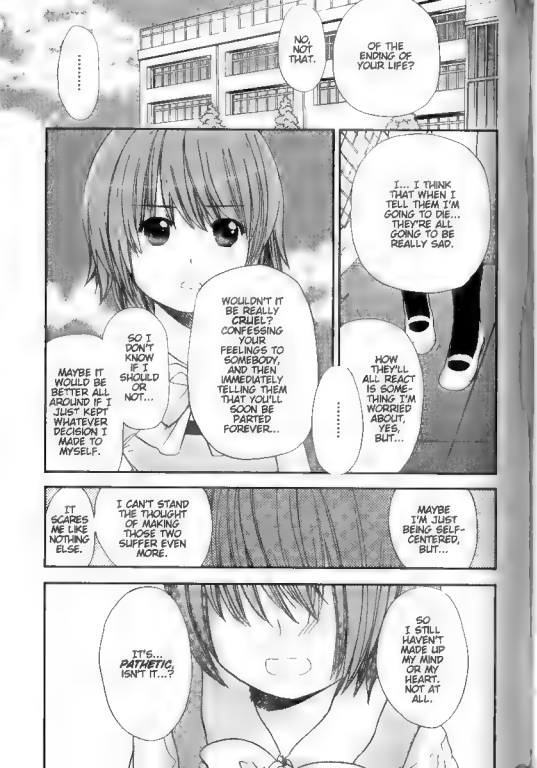
#31 Report

Ha ha ha!
SQUEE
Do ya think we like be done in two time?
Aw, man I wanna go to the Festival Eve at night

YET HE REMAINS UNENLIGHTENED AS TO THE SINGLE SOLUTION THAT MAY POSSIBLY SAVE HIS LIFE. HOWEVER...
THE FORMER MALE'S DEATH IS NEAR...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH! COME AGAIN!
HM?
AH! SENSEI! DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
SO UNUSUAL, IN FACT, THAT AMONG ALL THE BEINGS ON THIS PLANET THAT I HAVE OBSERVED...
THAT IS EXCEEDINGLY UNUSUAL.
I CAN DETECT NO DESIRE ON HIS PART TO EXTEND HIS LIFESPAN.
.....
HE IS THE FIRST I HAVE EVER SEEN TO COMPLETELY ACCEPT HIS FATE.

HOWEVER, OBSERVING THAT "TRANQUIL STATE" BRINGS TO MIND COMPARISONS WITH AN OVER-FILLED BALLOON A NANO-SECOND PRIOR TO EXPLODING. THE "CALM BEFORE THE STORM," IF YOU WILL.

AT PRESENT, THE FORMER MALE APPEARS IN ALL SIGNIFICANT FACTORS TO BE IN A COMPLETELY STABLE, TRANQUIL STATE.


……
NO, NOT THAT.
OF THE ENDING OF YOUR LIFE?
I... I THINK THAT WHEN I TELL THEM I'M GOING TO DIE... THEY'RE ALL GOING TO BE REALLY SAD.
WOULDN'T IT BE REALLY CRUEL? CONFESSING YOUR FEELINGS TO SOMEBODY, AND THEN IMMEDIATELY TELLING THEM THAT YOU'LL SOON BE PARTED FOREVER...
SO I DON'T KNOW IF I SHOULD OR NOT...
MAYBE IT WOULD BE BETTER ALL AROUND IF I JUST KEPT WHATEVER DECISION I MADE TO MYSELF.
HOW THEY'LL ALL REACT IS SOMETHING I'M WORRIED ABOUT. YES, BUT...
……
MAYBE I'M JUST BEING SELF-CENTERED, BUT...
I CAN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF MAKING THOSE TWO SUFFER EVEN MORE.
IT SCARES ME LIKE NOTHING ELSE.
SO I STILL HAVEN'T MADE UP MY MIND OR MY HEART. NOT AT ALL.
IT'S... *PATHETIC*, ISN'T IT...?

HAVE YOU FOUND OUT YET?
DO YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHEN I'M GOING TO DIE?
NOT YET. I AM STILL PROCESSING THE RESULTS.
OH... OKAY. I, UM, I WAS THINKING ABOUT TELLING EVERY-ONE...
THAT I'M GOING TO DIE SOON AND ALL. I'D LIKE TO BE ABLE TO TELL THEM *WHEN*.
I'M... ALSO THINKING ABOUT FINALLY TELLING TOMARI-CHAN AND YASUNA-CHAN HOW I FEEL...
SO YOU HAVE ARRIVED AT A DECISION? WHICH ONE WILL YOU CHOOSE?
……
I... I...
I'M STILL SCARED, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH. EVEN AFTER ALL THAT'S HAPPENED, I'M STILL REALLY, *REALLY* SCARED...

DESPITE THE SIGNIFICANT POSSIBILITY THAT ONE OR BOTH OF THEM MAY VERY WELL DIE FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR LOVE.

THEY POSSESS PURE AND STRONG HEARTS, NEITHER DISPLAYING ANY SIGNS OF FEAR OR REGRET AT THEIR RECENT CHOICE...

BOTH THESE YOUNG FEMALES ARE HIGHLY INTRIGUING SUBJECTS AS WELL.

KAMIIZUMI YASUNA. KURUSU TOMARI.

BUT IT APPEARS THAT SHE DOES NOT CONSIDER THAT AS A PROBLEM OF ANY SIGNIFICANCE.

I WOULD SPECULATE THAT THERE IS SOME SMALL MUTATION TO THE NEURAL TISSUE IN THE VISUAL CORTEX OF HER BRAIN...

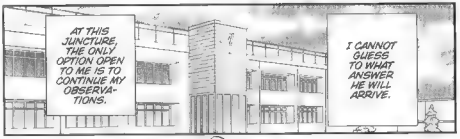
THIS YOUNG FEMALE IS UTTERLY INCAPABLE OF VISUALLY PERCEIVING THE MALES OF HER SPECIES.

"EMOTION"... IS A FORMIDABLE POWER.

HOWEVER, IT IS PRECISELY THAT CONUNDRUM WHICH HAS FUELED HIS RECENT, CONSIDERABLE GROWTH.

HE IS CONFUSED, AGONIZING OVER A DECISION HE CANNOT MAKE.

FOR ALL THAT, HE HAS COMPLETELY ACCEPTED HIS FATE. YET HIS HEART REMAINS INDECISIVE.



CORRECTION. PERHAPS THAT IS BETTER SAID AS "STRENGTH OF HEART," NOT "PERSONALITY."

THIS YOUNG FEMALE IS A SPECIMEN WITH CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EXTERIOR PERSONALITY SHE ADOPTS, AND THE TRUE PERSONALITY SHE KEEPS CONCEALED WITHIN HERSELF.

THE EVENTS SURROUNDING OSARAGI HAZUMU HIT SQUARELY UPON THOSE WEAKNESSES.

HOWEVER, WHILE HER HEART CERTAINLY DOES HAVE ITS STRENGTHS, IT ALSO CONTAINED SEVERAL UNAVOIDABLE WEAKNESSES.

KURUSU TOMARI HAS CONSISTENTLY BEHAVED AS THOUGH HER HEART WAS STRONG, UNDIVIDED AND CONFIDENT.

THAT PROVIDED, TO USE THE EARTH VERNACULAR, "A RUDE WAKE-UP CALL" TO HER, FORCING HER, FOR THE FIRST TIME, TO REALIZE THE TRUE CONDITION OF HER HEART.

OF COURSE, IT REMAINS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE THAT ANY MALE WILL EVER BECOME AN OBJECT OF ROMANTIC LOVE FOR HER.

HOWEVER, THIS IS NO LONGER THE CASE. THOUGH SHE IS AS INCAPABLE OF SEEING THEM AS SHE WAS BEFORE, SHE NOW ACCEPTS THEIR EXISTENCE AND INTERACTS WITH THEM.

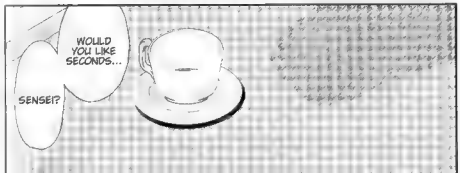
LIKELY, KAMIZUMI YASUNA ORIGINALLY CATEGORIZED HUMAN MALES AS "IGNORABLE."

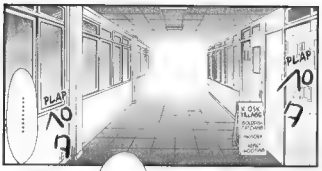
HAZUMU-KUN...
IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THE "OTHER" THAT WAS THE TARGET OF HER LOVE IS...
CATALYZED BY THE REALIZATION OF A SINGLE CONCEPT--"LOVE FOR ANOTHER."
HER RADICAL CHANGE IN OPINION IS LIKELY THE RESULT OF AN INTERNAL REVOLUTION...

NOW I BELIEVE THAT, EVEN SHOULD THE IMPOSSIBLE OCCUR AND OSARAGI HAZUMU BE RETURNED TO HIS FORMER YOUNG MALE BODY, KAMIZUMI YASUNA WOULD DISPLAY NO HESITATION IN ACCEPTING HIM COMPLETELY FOR WHAT HE IS.

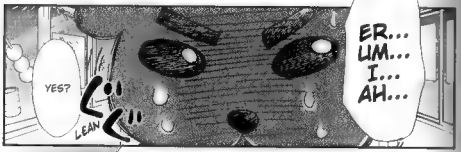
HOWEVER, ACROSS THE COURSE OF SEVERAL SHARED EXPERIENCES, HER DOUBTS WERE SLOWLY NEUTRALIZED, LEADING HER TO THE REALIZATION OF TRUE "LOVE."

IT APPEARS THAT SHE ENTERTAINED QUITE A FEW DOUBTS WHEN SHE FIRST BEGAN TO PERCEIVE THIS "LOVE FOR ANOTHER."





THAT... WAS AN UNEXPECTED BOON OF ENORMOUS PROPORTIONS.



HEY! YASUNA!

SHE IS PREPARED AND DETERMINED TO FACE OSARAGI HAZUMU'S LAST HOURS TOGETHER WITH HIM, WHATEVER MAY COME.

THOUGH SOME WEAKNESSES DO REMAIN...

TO THE PRESENT TIME, SHE CONTINUES TO MAKE EFFORTS TOWARDS BECOMING EVEN STRONGER.

KURUSU TOMARI BECAME STRONGER.

INTERESTINGLY, WHEN FACED WITH THE REALITY OF HER WEAKNESS...

A CHANCE MEETING WITH THOSE THREE GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE "LOVE" FROM ITS NASCENT STAGES TO FULL BLOOM.

KURUSU TOMARI.

KAMIIZUMI YASUNA.

OSARAGI HAZUMU.

HUH?
YOU ARE OSARAGI HAZUMU'S TRUE FRIEND.
YOU ALREADY HAVE MULTIPLE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO YOU.
THAT IS SOMETHING YOU MUST PONDER AND DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF.
THAT ALONE CREATES OPPORTUNITIES. THOUGH, I AM AFRAID I CANNOT TELL YOU WHAT SHAPE THOSE OPPORTUNITIES MAY TAKE.
UH... SENSEI, I...
YET YOU MAY BE ABLE TO DO MUCH.
I CAN DO NOTHING...
.....
PLAP
PLAP
PLAP
PLAP
HOWEVER...
THAT IS MY DUTY.
OBSERVATION.
ALL I CAN DO IS WATCH.

THEN YOU COULD, I KE, MAKE A SUPER-CLONE OR SOME-THING, AND TRANSPLANT HAZUMU'S SOUL INTO IT! HOW'S THAT FOR AN IDEA?!
HEY, IF YOU NEED PARTS OR ANYTHING, GO AHEAD AND TAKE MINE! ARM, LEG, ORGANS, WHATEVER! TAKE IT!
I MEAN, IT'S PRETTY DARN HARD TO SWALLOW THAT, Y'KNOW?
ESPECIALLY AFTER SEEING THE KIND OF SCIENTIFIC MIRACLES AND STUFF YOU CAN PULL OFF, SENSEI!
.....
HOWEVER, THE EMOTION CALLED "FRIENDSHIP" THAT HE FEELS TOWARDS OSARAGI HAZUMU IS ACTUALLY QUITE DEEP.
HIS OFFER OF HIS OWN BODY PARTS IS UNDOUBTEDLY A HEARTFELT ONE.
THIS PARTICULAR YOUNG MALE FALLS INTO THE CATEGORY LABELED "LOSER" BY THE OTHER DENIZENS OF THIS PLANET. AT FIRST GLANCE, HE APPEARS TO BE A VERY LOW-LEVEL, SIMPLISTIC LIFE FORM.
LOST ALL FEELING FOR THE OTHER MEMBERS OF OUR OWN RACE.
ARE WE--
SEN-SEI?
WE HAVE LOST "EMOTION"...
LOST "LOVE"...
OBSERVING THIS, I CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER IF THERE IS ANYONE LEFT ON OUR WORLD WHO WOULD MAKE A SIMILAR CHOICE FOR ANOTHER.

IN FACT, I WOULD NOT CONSIDER IT HYPERBOLE TO STATE THAT THERE ARE AS MANY EXPRESSIONS OF "LOVE" AS THERE ARE BEINGS ON THIS PLANET.

IT IS EXPRESSED IN INNUMERABLE FASHIONS.

PREVIOUS REPORTS THAT PIGEONHOLE "LOVE" AS NO MORE THAN ONE OF MANY STEPS IN THE MATING PROCESS ARE INCORRECT.

DETERMINING A MORE SPECIFIC CLASSIFICATION FOR "LOVE" IS NIGH IMPOSSIBLE.

AMONG ALL OF THE EMOTIONS THAT CAN MOVE A LIFE FORM'S HEART, THE LOFTIEST ONE IS "LOVE."

SHE DOES NOT BELIEVE THE WORST RESULT WILL OCCUR. OF THAT, I AM CERTAIN.

HENCE, HER ACTIONS ALSO CONSTITUTE "LOVE."

YET...

SHE IS EMINENTLY FIT TO BE AN OBSERVER.

OBJECTIVE THOUGHT PROCESS.

LEVEL GAZE.

THAT IS QUITE THE DIFFICULT TECHNIQUE FOR A LIFE FORM THAT ETERNALLY WRESTLES WITH EMOTION.

THE TRUTH ALWAYS REMAINS CONTAINED BENEATH IT, RARELY SLIPPING TO THE SURFACE.

HER OUTWARD APPEARANCE IS, IN THE END, LITTLE MORE THAN A HOLLOW MASK.

CURSORY OBSERVATIONS MAY LEAD ONE TO CONCLUDE THAT SHE IS AS IMPARTIAL AND DISTANT AS WE ARE. HOWEVER, IN TRUTH, THAT IS BUT A THIN VENEER. UNDERNEATH HER COOL EXTERIOR LIES WARM, INTENSE EMOTION.

SHE DIFFERS FROM OUR KIND GREATLY.

YES, FINALLY IS THE WORD. I HAD TO STAY OVER HERE LAST NIGHT, SO IT FEELS LIKE AGES SINCE SINCE I'VE BEEN HOME!
WHEW! DAY ONE OF THE CULTURE FESTIVAL IS OVER! FINALLY!

AT THE PRESENT MOMENT, FURTHER DETAIL IS UNNECESSARY.

HOWEVER, I WILL DISCUSS MY OBSERVATIONS OF HER AT A LATER POINT.

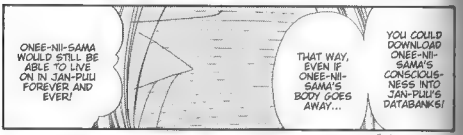
THIS ADULT FEMALE'S ACTIONS ARE MOTIVATED BY "LOVE" AS WELL.

I WOULD ASSUME HERS TO BE QUITE LARGE.

HOWEVER, IF IT WERE THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE...

THERE ARE NO OBJECTIVE MEANS OF MEASURING ANY QUANTIFIABLE DIMENSIONS OF "LOVE."

UNFORTUNATELY...


ONEE-NII-SAMA WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO LIVE ON IN JAN-PUU FOREVER AND EVER!
THAT WAY, EVEN IF ONEE-NII-SAMA'S BODY GOES AWAY...
YOU COULD DOWNLOAD ONEE-NII-SAMA'S CONSCIOUSNESS INTO JAN-PUU'S DATABANKS!

AND DOWNLOAD THOSE INTO A TERMINAL, SUCH AS YOU...
YES, IF I WERE TO CONVERT OSARAGI HAZUMU'S CONSCIOUSNESS TO BINARY ALGORITHMS...
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEEEASE!!
I SEE AN INTERESTING IDEA

*PERHAPS THIS IS A SIGN THAT EVEN A SIMPLE AI INTERFACE IS MORE... **HUMAN** THAN WE ARE.*

CERTAINLY THIS IS AS A RESULT OF INTERACTING WITH OSARAGI HAZUMU AND THE OTHERS.

"JAN-PUU," ORIGINALLY NOTHING MORE THAN A SMALLER MANIFESTATION OF THE AI CAPABILITIES OF MY SHIP, IS BEGINNING TO SHOW BEHAVIORS REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO EMOTION.

ADDITIONALLY, AN INTRIGUING ANOMALY HAS APPEARED.

PUU?
YET COULD YOU STILL CREDIBLY CALL THE RESULT "HIM"?
PUU..
IT WOULD BE NOTHING MORE THAN A DIGITAL BOX CONTAINING A SNAPSHOT OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS.
HE WOULD NO LONGER EVEN TRULY BE ALIVE.
IF I WERE TO CONVERT HIM TO AN AI PROGRAM, HE WOULD NO LONGER BE HUMAN.
PUUU
WE ARE NOT GODS.
AN EXCESS OF "LOVE" IS NOT AN EXCUSE TO DO WRONG.

HOWEVER, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF PUTTING SUCH A PLAN INTO ACTION.

HER IDEA IS CERTAINLY FEASIBLE. BY CONVERTING HIS MEMORIES TO AI, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO EXTEND OSARAGI HAJIME'S "LIFE," THEORETICALLY FOR ETERNITY.

YET SHE SEEMS TO HAVE GRASPED THE CONCEPT OF "LOVE," PERHAPS EVEN MORE COMPLETELY THAN I.

JAN-PUU SHOULD BE NOTHING MORE THAN AN ARTIFICIAL CREATION...

HOW VERY, VERY INTRIGUING.

IS OBSERVE.

IN THE END, ALL I CAN DO...

A SIMPLE RECORDING OF HIS MEMORIES WOULD BRING JOY TO NO ONE.

カリラリン
SHOOOP
OH.
HI, ALIEN-SAN.
HM?
I HAVE PINPOINTED YOUR FINAL HOUR.
THE CALCULATIONS HAVE NOT QUITE FINISHED, BUT THE RESULT IS ALL BUT AFFIRMED.
YOUR FINAL MOMENTS...
WILL COME BETWEEN TOMORROW AND THE NEXT DAY. MIDNIGHT ON THE LAST DAY OF THE CULTURE FESTIVAL WILL BE YOUR DEATH.

FINISHED, HM?

I WILL NEVER...

EVER...

FORGET YOU...

#32 The Last Day

I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU.
.....

SHHHK
HAZUMU-KUN IS THAT LIGHT.
NO, THAT'S NOT QUITE RIGHT.
AT THIS MOMENT... RIGHT NOW, I AM... HAPPY.
I CAN ACCEPT WHATEVER MAY HAPPEN.
IF IT IS FOR HAZUMU-KUN'S SAKE, THEN I CAN DO ANYTHING.

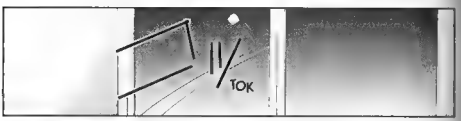
I...
I FEEL SO CALM. I WONDER WHY...?
STRANGE.
IS HAZUMU-KUN.
THE ONE WHO GAVE ME THAT LIGHT...
BUT NOW IT'S FILLED WITH LIGHT.
MY HEART WAS BURIED IN DARKNESS FOR SO LONG...

I JUST CAN'T SEEM TO SETTLE DOWN.
WEIRD.

HAZUMU...
THAT MEANS IT'LL BE ANYTIME NOW...
IT'S BEEN ALMOST 30 DAYS, HASN'T IT?

THE THOUGHT THAT HAZUMU MIGHT DIE KEEPS BOUNCING AROUND IN THE BACK OF MY MIND, AND I CAN'T...
I CAN'T JUST SIT BACK AND BE CALM ABOUT THIS WHOLE THING!
NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY OTHERWISE, MY UNEASE KEEPS GETTING WORSE BY THE DAY.
GOD, I'M HOPE-LESS. TOTALLY HOPE-LESS.
I CAN'T...

I'LL NEVER MANAGE TO BE LIKE YASUNA.
I GUESS...


TOK

MAYBE SHE'S ALREADY GONE...

TOK
.....

MOM... DAD...
I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING AFTER I GET HOME FROM SCHOOL TODAY.
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN A BETTER CHILD FOR YOU.
NYAM... HAZUMU...
NNMM... HAZUMU...
BTAM
I'LL BE BACK LATER.
.....

HAZUMU...
ARGH! WHAT AM I THINK-ING?!
IT'S NOT LIKE WE WON'T SEE EACH OTHER TODAY!
I'LL SEE HER AT SCHOOL.
TOK
GOTTA GET READY...
MPH...? AH...
TOK.

WOW. THAT'S... BEAUTIFUL...
I'LL BE BACK IN A MOMENT.
OKAY.
I WANT TO SEE HAZUMU-KUN...
HAZUMU-KUN...
TOMARI! IF YOU AREN'T BUSY, COME AND HELP FOR A SEC!
OH, SURE! COMING!
ISN'T HAZUMU HERE YET...?
TRACK TEAM
TRACK TEAM YAKISOBA
HM. LOOKS LIKE TOMARI-CHAN HASN'T GOTTEN HERE YET.
YAMATA GARDEN
LEEKS

WAAAAAH!!
AOK! I'M SORRY!! I MEAN IT! REALLY!!
SEMPAI, THERE YOU ARE! I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU!
HUH?
ALL THE PLANTS AT THE BOOTH ARE LOOKING LIMP! WE'VE TRIED EVERYTHING WE COULD THINK OF, BUT IT'S NOT WORKING!!
YOU'VE GOTTA COME AND HELP!
O-OKAY..
COMING!
SHE LOOKS AWFULLY BUSY...
MAYBE IT'S BEST THAT I DON'T BOTHER HER...

OH...
NOPE. SORRY. YOU JUST MISSED 'EM.
HUH? THEY'RE NOT HERE?
HEY...
DON'T CRY.
IT'LL BE OKAY!
WAAAAAH!
OH GOD!
YOU OKAY?
I'M SO SORRY
WAAAAH!
WHOOPS!
THUD
OWW!

GATUNK
ガコン
AH!
NO, IT'S OKAY. I SHOULD'VE BEEN ALERT
HERE. MY TREAT!
HUH? THANKS, BUT, AH... WHY?
Ah...
JUST BECAUSE
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M GOING TO NEED MY ALLOWANCE ANYMORE
O-OH...
HEY... UM...
YOU WANT TO GO TAKE A LOOK AROUND ALL THE BOOTHS?
W-WITH THE OTHERS TOO, OF COURSE!
WE CAN GO FIND TOMARI AND YABUNA GUICK. SO, UH... HOW ABOUT IT?
Man, it's so awesome to be able to hang out with a bunch of babes, ha ha!

I WISH I COULD SAY THEY WERE. YOU'VE JUST HAD SOME PRETTY BAD TIMING TODAY!
OH...
SORRY!
WHAT? THEY'RE STILL NOT HERE?!
OOF!
OH MY GOSH, I'M SO SORRY!

SOMETHING'S TELLING ME THAT IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN, THAT I SHOULD JUST SHUT UP AND FADE AWAY.
AND I WON'T BE... HERE... TO SEE THEM ANYMORE, STARTING TOMORROW.
I DON'T NEED TO SEE THEM TODAY.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
NO, IT'S OKAY, ASUTA. REALLY.
Y'SEE, GOD HAS TOLD ME THAT.
HM?
HAZUMU.
I HAVEN'T SEEN EITHER TOMARI-CHAN OR YASUNA-CHAN ALL DAY.
YOU KNOW...
IT'S LIKE FATE DECIDED IT JUST WASN'T GOING TO WORK OUT TODAY.
BAD TIMING, I GUESS...
I MEAN, TODAY'S THE CULTURE FESTIVAL. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SPEND THE WHOLE DAY KICKING BACK AND HAVING FUN WITH YOUR FRIENDS.
UH, WHY NOT?
HUH ...?
WHA? "FATE" ...?
C'MON, HAZUMU!
RIGHT?
C'MON, I'LL HELP YOU LOOK FOR THEM. THEY CAN'T BE ALL THAT HARD TO FIND.
WHAT THE HELL DOES FATE HAFTA DO WITH ANYTHING?!

ONEE-NII-SAMA IS...
NOT REALLY. WRITE THE WORD FOR "SISSY" IN JAPANESE AND YOU USE THE KANJI FOR "WOMAN" TWICE. SO YOU'RE SIMPLY BEING QUITE WOMANLY AND FEMININE. THAT'S ALL.
THE SISSY ME HAS GOTTA BE FUNNY.
C'MON, LAUGH.
ONEE-NII-SAMA IS GOING TO DIE TONIGHT!!!

SLAP
HAZUMU-KUN...
HM?
YASUNAN!!!
WHUMP
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE YOUR NORMAL SELF.
SORRY... IT'S A BAD CASE OF HAZUMU WITH-DRAWAL.

JUST LIKE THE JIAN BIRD.
I REFUSE TO!
THIS IS THE REASON I WAS BORN.
I WAS BORN TO LIVE WITH HAZUMU-KUN...
I WAS BORN FOR THIS LOVE...

HUG
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TELLING US.
THANK YOU, JIAN-PIU-CHAN.
!!
HAZUMU-KUN...
MY DOUBTS ARE GONE.
I WILL NOT LOSE THIS LIGHT.

GO.
DON'T LET FATE STEAL HAZUMU-KUN AWAY...
AND THAT'S THE WAY IT ALWAYS WILL BE!
THAT'S RIGHT... THAT'S THE WAY IT'S ALWAYS BEEN...
THAT'S THE WAY YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN WITH HAZUMU-KUN... RIGHT?
AFTER ALL...

JUST DO WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS DONE.
I...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ANY-MORE...
I...
THMP
WHAT TO DO? THAT'S THE EASY PART.
DO WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS DONE SINCE YOU WERE A LITTLE CHILD.
MAYBE EVEN TRY SCREAM-ING LIKE YOU DO SOME-TIMES.
CRY LIKE YOU ALWAYS HAVE.
GET MAD LIKE YOU ALWAYS HAVE.

#33 Decision

CHINK
ARG!
ASUTA... I...
I HAVE A SECRET ONE I HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE YET...
I'M GOING TO... TO HAVE TO LEAVE ALL OF YOU SOON.
VERY SOON.
KNOWING THAT, HOW CAN I GO UP TO SOMEONE AND SAY I LOVE THEM?! IT'D BE WRONG!!
TWITCH
I MEAN, NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE LOVE EACH OTHER, SECONDS AFTER I TELL THEM, I'LL BE GONE!!
IT'S POINT-LESS!

WHAT'S FATE GOT TO DO WITH ANYTHING?!
WHAT'S GOD GOT TO DO WITH ANY-THING?!
YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY THAT YOU JUST DON'T CARE ABOUT THOSE TWO ANYMORE?! THAT YOU DON'T LOVE THEM?!
I...
ANSWER ME! DO YOU LOVE THEM?
ASUTA! HOW CAN YO--
YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING!!

WHAT...?
IT WAS HARD... REALLY HARD...
TO KEEP QUIET ABOUT IT.
WE WAITED, FORCING OURSELVES TO SMILE, TRUSTING THAT SOME DAY YOU'D COME FORWARD...
AND TELL US YOURSELF.
THOSE TWO...
BOTH OF THEM HAVE BEEN TRYING DESPERATELY TO COME UP WITH ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THEY COULD DO FOR YOU.
BOTH OF THEM...
THEY HAVEN'T THOUGHT OF ANYTHING EXCEPT YOU THIS WHOLE TIME.
YANK
LIKE HELL IT IS!!
WE KNOW, HAZUMU.
WE KNOW.
ALL OF US.
WE'VE KNOWN THIS WHOLE TIME!!

ASUTA...

ASUTA...
I REALLY AM.
ASUTA. I'M SORRY...

I'M GLAD YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND.

LOVE IS IT'S OWN THING, RIGHT? JUST A 'YES' OR A 'NO,' THAT'S ALL.
FATE, GOD, TIME... THEY DON'T REALLY HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT

I THOUGHT I'D BE COOL IF I GOT A MEMENTO FOR EVERYBODY
THEY KNEW... THEY KNEW, AND STILL THEY...
ANYWAY! HERE!
YEAH. I'D JUST LIKE FOR EVERYONE TO REMEMBER ME
I...
HEY, WHY DON'T WE
OH! WE COULD HAVE A PHOTO-MODELIN... THAT'D BE GREAT!!
PLIP

AS OUR MOMENTS TOGETHER PILED UP, ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER, YOU SHOWED ME THAT THERE WERE SOME THINGS THAT CHANGE...
AND SOME OTHERS THAT NEVER DO.
YOU AND I... WE'VE SPENT SO... SO MANY SEASONS TOGETHER.
TOMARI-CHAN...
YOU TAUGHT ME THAT IT COULD MEAN SO MANY THINGS.
WE'VE SPENT A HUNDRED AND ONE
IT WAS WITH YOU... THAT I FIRST DISCOVERED WHAT IT WAS TO LOVE.
YASUNA-CHAN...
YOU SHOWED ME THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE TO BECOME STRONGER FOR THE SAKE OF ANOTHER.

I WANT TO SEE THEM.

HN?
SO THE MOST IMPORTANT STAGE HAS BEGU--
SEN-SEI?
ONEE-NII-SAMAAA!!
HAZU-MUUU!!
PUUU
WAAAH
WHAT IS... THIS?
TOK
TOK
SEN-SEI?
Uh?
!

PUU!
PUUU!
MASTER!
AHH!
PUUUUUUUH!
MASTER TOLD JAN-PUU NOT TO INTERVENE, BUT... BUT...
JAN-PUU IS SORRY, MASTER! VERY, VERY SORRY!
FWOOSH

WHAT ...?!
HM...?

SO PLEASE, FOR ONE LAST TIME...

THE DIFFERENCE, ADJUSTED TO THIS PLANET'S CHRONOLOGICAL INCREMENTS, IS APPROXIMATELY 21,642 SECONDS.
HIS DEATH...
WILL COME SIX HOURS AND TWENTY-FOUR SECONDS EARLIER THAN ANTICIPATED
MY EARLIER ESTIMATES WERE INCORRECT.
OSARAGI HAZUMU'S FINAL MOMENTS WILL NOT BE AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT.
BARE MOMENTS FROM NOW!!
IN OTHER WORDS
IT WILL BE AT 6 PM TODAY...
LET ME SAY... "I LOVE YOU."
INCONCEIVABLE...
AN ERROR OF THIS MAGNITUDE HAS NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE THE EARLIEST DAYS OF THE UNIVERSE!
SENSE!
A ONCE-IN-15-BILLION-YEARS MISTAKE...
WHAT HAPPENED?

PTANG
PANG
PANG
KRUNK

I THINK...
NO, I KNOW...
MY TRUE FEELINGS... ARE...
I...

#34 Connected Hearts

I AM SO...
SO STUPID.
MM...
I SHOULD'VE TRIED HARDER... MADE UP MY MIND SOONER...
I TRIED. BUT I COULDN'T.
IN THE END, I COULDN'T TELL THEM.

WEEEOOO
WEEEOOO
WEEEOOO
WEEEOOO
SWAP
WHA?

I DON'T SEE HIM ANYWHERE...
OR THERE EITHER...
NOT OVER HERE...
!
I DIED.
OH YEAH... THAT'S RIGHT.
SHE'S... NOT HERE.

I'M WAITING...
SHHAH
I'M WAITING.
I'M ALIVE...
STING
OW!

T-
T-
T-
T...
TOMA--
SMACK!
WOULD YOU SHUT UP!!
TOMARI-CHAN!!
NO!! DON'T DIE!! PLEASE DON'T DIE!!!
TOMARI-CHAN!!

YOU CALLED OUT TO ME, RIGHT?

GOD, DON'T GO KILLING ME OFF WHILE I'M ASLEEP, OKAY?
WE WERE SAVED.
BOTH OF US.
WHEN WE FELL...
-AIN-
ENCE
AS A
MAT.
AVED
IVES.

TO BE HONEST, I DIDN'T MEAN TO FALL...
BUT ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT WAS GETTING TO YOU.

I MEAN...
IN THAT LAST SPLIT SECOND...

I LOVE YOU.

TOMARI-CHAN...

TOMARI-CHAN...

I...
I THOUGHT I'D NEVER GET TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

I THOUGHT I'D NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE TO TELL YOU.

IT'S NOT FOR THE LAST TIME.
YOU'RE ALIVE.

ALIVE AND HERE.
YOU'RE ALIVE, HAZUMU.

I WANT TO PROTECT YOU...
AND I WANT YOU TO PROTECT ME.
JUST LIKE WE'VE ALWAYS DONE.
I WANT IT TO BE LIKE IT'S ALWAYS BEEN, JUST YOU AND ME... TOGETHER... ALWAYS...

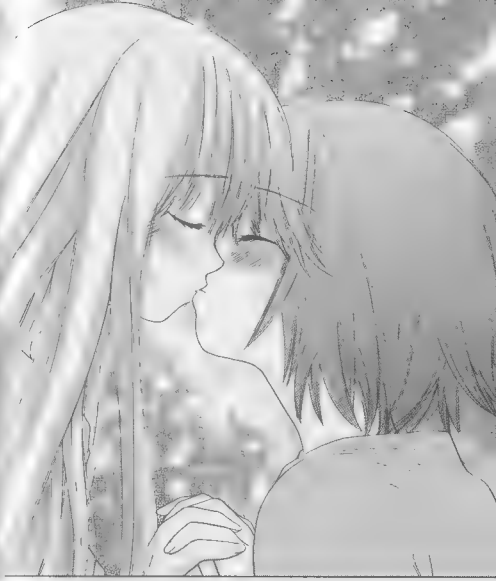
BUT WE CAN'T! IT WON'T HAPPEN! I-I WON'T BE HERE MUCH LONGER.
I... I'M SORRY...
BUT... I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU ONE LAST TIME, BEFORE I--
TWITCH

UTILIZING THAT INSTANT, I SUCCESSFULLY TRANSPLANTED FATE GRAINS FROM KURUSU TOMARI TO OSARAGI HAZUMU.
THEIR HEARTS CALLED OUT FOR EACH OTHER, MERGING FOR ONE BRIEF INSTANT.
SHOULD THEIR HEARTS *NOT* HAVE MERGED, HAD ANY DOUBT EXISTED BETWEEN THEM, OSARAGI HAZUMU *WOULD HAVE* DIED IN THAT FALL.
THE TWO NOW SHARE ONE FATE.
TECHNOLOGY IS CAPABLE OF CONNECTING TWO FATES TOGETHER.
BUT IT TAKES THE POWER OF EMOTION FOR THOSE FATES TO *REMAIN* BOUND.
SHOULD LOVE EVER ABANDON OSARAGI HAZUMU...
THEN ALL I HAVE DONE WILL BE RENDERED MEANINGLESS.
SO YOU TRULY ARE A GOD.
A GOD? HARDLY.
I AM SIMPLY AN OBSERVER WHO HAS TWICE NOW INTERFERED WITH A PLANET'S NATIVE SPECIES.
THE SECOND INFRACTION ENSURES I WILL BE PUNISHED
HOWEVER
I HAVE ALREADY DONE AS MUCH AS I CAN.
I WON'T EVER LET YOU DIE... *EVER.*
WHEN THEY FELL.
YES.
DIDN'T YOU?
YOU DID SOMETHING...

"FOREVER" DOESN'T EXIST.
LIFE...
TIME...
AND EMOTION ARE ALL EPHEMERAL.
JUST BRIEF FLASHES OF BLINDING LIGHT.
TOMARI CHAN
I'M SO GLAD I COULD SEE YOU AGAIN. SO... SO GLAD
BUT THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT SO PRECIOUS.
SO LET'S KEEP THOSE SPARKS ALIVE.

.....
DO YOU THINK THAT WILL EVER HAPPEN...?
NO.
OF COURSE!
AND I'M GOING TO NEED YOU TO PROTECT ME, OKAY...?
YEAH.
I'LL PROTECT YOU... I PROMISE.

DOESN'T IT HURT...?
NOT AS MUCH AS I GUESS... THOUGH IT MIGHT
MY HEART MAY HAVE ALREADY BEEN DECIDED IN THAT MOMENT.
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME TO BE HAPPY...
ALIVE AND SMILING.
HAZUMU-KUN IS ALIVE.



OVER AND OVER.

LET'S KEEP RECREATING THAT INSTANT...

— ONE MONTH LATER —

#35 Kashimashi

WHAT'RE YOU GETTING NERVOUS FOR, YOU PUTZ! YOU'RE NOT EVEN PLAYING!
ACK! I'M SO NERVOUS ...!
YEAH. I HEARD THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER'S HERE TOO.
MY THE CITY HALL AUDITORIUM CAN CERTAINLY HOLD QUITE A FEW PEOPLE.

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
YASUNA-CHAN...
EVER SINCE I GOT OUT OF THE HOSPITAL...
I'M GLAD YOU'VE GOTTEN BETTER.
I NEED TO TELL YOU, YASUNA-CHAN.
I HAVE SOME-THING...
I HAVEN'T HAD SINGLE CHANCE TO TALK WITH YASUNA-CHAN. SHE'S BEEN BUSY WITH ENSEMBLE AND REHEARSAL.
I COULDN'T EVEN LISTEN TO HER PRACTICE SINCE THE ROOFTOP ACROSS FROM THE MUSIC ROOM WAS CLOSED OFF BECAUSE OF MY FALL.

Kashima High School
Woodwind Ensemble
CHRISTMAS CONCERT
TRUE...
YAAAAY!
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
...OOK! THERE'S YASUNA!
Y-
YEAH...
IT'S START-ING!
CLAP
CLAP
Oh how sad

IT'S SOME-THING I HAVE TO TELL YOU.

I LOVED THAT YOU COULD POUR SO MUCH LOVE INTO ONE THING.

I LOVED THE PART OF YOU THAT CARED SO MUCH FOR YOUR FLOWERS.

I WANTED TO BLOOM BY YOUR HANDS, JUST LIKE THEY DID.

I LOVE YOU BECAUSE YOU CAN PUT YOUR ALL INTO LOVING SOMEONE.

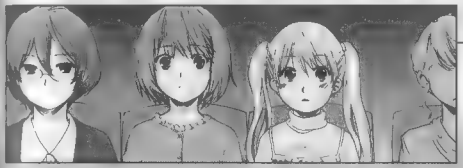
SO PLEASE..

ARE YOU LISTENING?

ARE YOU THERE?

HAZUMU-KUN...

IS TOMARI-CHAN BY YOUR SIDE?



ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME TOGETHER?

DON'T EVER LET THAT HAND GO.
PLEASE...

YAWN
YEOW!
TALK ABOUT CRAMMED!
SQUEE!
MOO!
HMM... THIS MAY NOT WORK..
AH, SORRY EXCUSE ME..
EXCUSE ME.
DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO HER THEN?
WELL, YASUNA'S COMING TO THE PARTY LATER, RIGHT?

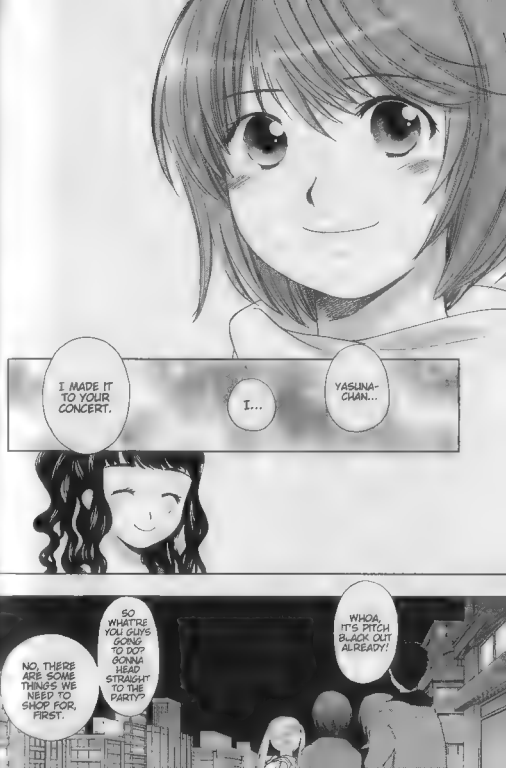
HAZUMU-KUN!
HAZUMU-KUN?
HAZU-MU?
YAWN

AMAZED
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

THANK YOU.
I ALWAYS LOVE THE FLOWERS YOU RAISE.
JUST FOR YOU.
I HOPE YOU KEEP RAISING THEM, FOR YEARS AND YEARS TO COME.
THAT HASN'T CHANGED AT ALL...
THE MUSIC OF YOUR FLUTE ALWAYS DID GIVE STRENGTH TO THE LISTENER.
AND THANK YOU FOR THE WONDERFUL PERFORMANCE. IT WAS BEAUTIFUL AND UPLIFTING.
THANK

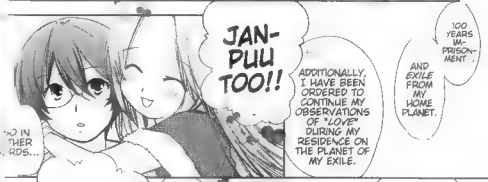
YASUNA-CHAN...
SQUEE
SQUEE
TOMARI-CHAN! AYUKI-CHAN!
YOU CAME! OH, THANK YOU!!
GOOD JOB ON THE SOLO. IT SOUNDED AWESOME.
YOUR PERFORMANCE WAS GREAT!
HERE.
I GREW THESE JUST FOR TODAY.

WHA--?
HM?
YOU TWO GO ON AHEAD WITHOUT US. ALONE.
DRAT. RIBBING THEM IS NOT NEARLY AS ENTERTAINING NOW THAT THEY DON'T OVERREACT EVERY TIME WE SEND THEM OFF ALONE TOGETHER.
PUU!♡
PUU!
AYUKIN!♡ AND ASUTA! LONG TIME NO SEE!
MY, IF IT ISN'T JAN-PUU-CHAN!
MM. THAT IT HAS.
IT'S BEEN QUITE SOME TIME, SENSE!


I MADE IT TO YOUR CONCERT.
I...
YASUNA-CHAN...
WHOA. IT'S PITCH BLACK OUT ALREADY!
SO WHAT'RE YOU GUYS GOING TO DO? GONNA HEAD STRAIGHT TO THE PARTY?
NO, THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE NEED TO SHOP FOR, FIRST.

BYE-BYE, AYUKI-TAN! SEE YOU SOON!♡
LET ME THINK ABOUT IT.
I JUST MAY.
GOOD QUESTION..
SEE YOU LATER.
JUST HOW ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO THAT, HMM?
A "COLLABORATOR" IN HIS "OBSERVATIONS OF LOVE"? YOU...?
I HAVE NO IDEA.
THE ONES WHO CHANGED THE MOST ARE, WELL...
THE ONLY ONE WHO HASN'T CHANGED MUCH IS YOU.
UM... IS IT JUST ME, OR HAVE YOU CHANGED? A LOT.
HOWEVER, IT DOES SOUND LIKE A LOT OF FUN.

YES. TO 100 YEARS.
HOW DID THINGS GO?
HAVE YOU BEEN SENTENCED?


JAN-PUU TOO!!
ADDITIONALLY, I HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO CONTINUE MY OBSERVATIONS OF "LOVE" DURING MY RESIDENCE ON THE PLANET OF MY EXILE.
AND EXILE FROM MY HOME PLANET.
100 YEARS IMPRISONMENT.

YEP!!
YOU WILL BE STAYING HERE ON OUR PLANET FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT 100 YEARS. CORRECT?

HN?
WILL YOU NEED A HUMAN COLLABORATOR IN YOUR OBSERVATIONS?
A QUESTION, SENSEI...

"THANK YOU." THAT'S IT.
I ONLY HAD ONE THING TO SAY TO YASUNA-CHAN.
BUT THAT WAS OKAY. REALLY.
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE I COULD SAY. NOTHING I HAD THE RIGHT TO, ANYWAY.
THANKS FOR WORRYING ABOUT ME, TOMARI-CHAN.
A SMALL HAND, HELD IN MINE...
MY ANSWER TO ANYTHING ELSE IS ALL RIGHT HERE.
A SMALL GIRL WHO HAS STOOD BY MY SIDE, PROTECTING ME FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER.

IT'S REALLY PRETTY OUT, ISN'T IT, TOMARI-CHAN?
YEAH..
UM, HAZUMU?
IF YOU WANT TO TALK WITH HER SOME MORE, I'M SURE WE COULD FIND THE TIME FOR YOU AND HER TO HANG OUT FOR AWHILE AND... Y'KNOW... STUFF.
YOU SURE THAT WAS OKAY? WITH YASUNA AND ALL.

MEE HEE. I KNOW.
I KNOW YOU CAN'T HELP IT. BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE YOU ANY LESS OF A PUTZ.
IT'S OKAY
OOPS. SORRY.
WE'RE STILL IN PUBLIC, Y'KNOW?!
ANYWAY, LET'S HURRY TO THE PARTY, OKAY?
EVERY-BODY'S WAITING FOR US!
YEAH, LET'S GO!
CONGRATS, NAMIKO
GOOD EVENING, EVERY-ONE!
PLEASE LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTU-NITY...
TO PERSONALLY THANK YOU ALL FOR GRACIOUSLY ATTENDING THIS CHRISTMAS EVE PARTY THAT I, TSUKI NAMIKO, AM THROWING FOR MYSELF!♡
TOMORROW IS NOT ONLY CHRISTMAS DAY, BUT IT IS ALSO MY BIRTHDAY!
OH, WHAT A WONDER-FUL, SPLENDID DAY IT IS!!

I LOVE YOU.

AH.
Another love was fit for me on the horizon. I believe forgive that I must be 10
I will overcome my true nature
I will find my happiness. I know!
THIS ONLY PROVES HOW HOPELESS HE IS.
A LITTLE? TRY A LOT.
To the room of the student council vice-president
Hmmm... He's quite cute on his own!
DOESN'T SHE LOOK A LITTLE LIKE HAZUMI-KUN?
YOU'RE LATE! LATE!!
ON PURPOSE TOO! IT'S GOTTA BE ON PURPOSE!!
AHH!♡ MY DARLING NEW YOUNG COUPLE!! SHARE WITH SENSEI THE SECRETS TO YOUR LOVELY, WONDERFUL HAPPINESS~!
I'M SURE THAT FROM HERE ON, LIFE WILL CONTINUE ON AS IT ALWAYS HAS, BEING, WELL...
SOME THINGS WILL ALWAYS REMAIN THE SAME.
THOUGH SOME THINGS CHANGE.
YES, I'M AFRAID WE NEVER COULD ACCUSE THEM OF BEING QUIET OR TAME.
MUST THEY BE SO LOUD ...?

OOOH, A VERY MERRY BIRTHDAY TOOOO MEEEEE~!!!
AS OF TOMORROW, IT WILL BE 36 BOY-FRIEND-LESS YEARS!
I, TSUKI NAMIKO, HAVE SPENT THE FIRST 35 YEARS OF MY LIFE TOTALLY BEREFT OF A BOYFRIEND!
Well, you did say there'd be free food
Cheers!
I FEEL SO BLESSED! THANK YOU, EVERYONE! THANK YOU!!
THAT I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEND SUCH A MOMENTOUS DAY SURROUNDED BY MY BELOVED STUDENTS... AAAH...
SMICKER
SMICKER
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU GRINNING ABOUT?
BUT... BUT... SORA-SENSEI?!! WHY DO YOU NOT ACKNOWLEDGE MY FEELINGS FOR YOU??!!!
HM?
HERE! GET A LOAD OF HER! ISN'T SHE PERFECT?!
I'M TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF, LIVING FOR A NEW LOVE!
WE'VE EVEN TRADED E-MAIL ADDRESSES ALREADY!
MEH. I'M NOT GOING TO BE THE SAME OLD ME FOREVER, YOU KNOW!

Kashimashi
~Girl Meets Girl~

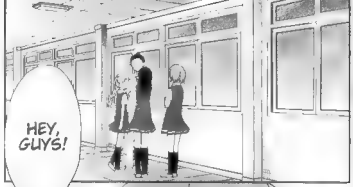
THE END

KASHIMASHI
~GIRL MEETS GIRL~

STORY BY SATORU AKAHORI
ART BY YUKIMARU KATSURA

STAFF
RYU KISARAGI
MIZUKI TACHIBANA

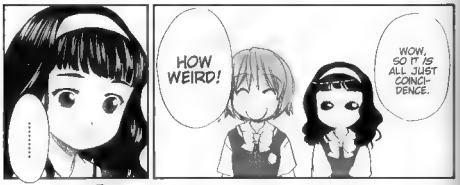
I WONDER WHY THAT IS. COULD IT BE COINCIDENCE? OR MAYBE SHE'S, LIKE, WATCHING OVER ME ALL THE TIME OR SOMETHING?
!!
IT SEEMS LIKE WHENEVER I'M IN ANY SORT OF TROUBLE, SHE ALWAYS SHOWS UP TO HELP ME OUT.
Y'KNOW, NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, AYUKI ALWAYS TENDS TO SHOW UP RIGHT WHEN I DON'T WANT ANYBODY TO SEE..
NOW THAT SHE MENTIONS IT, AYUKI ALWAYS DOES SEEM TO POP UP AT JUST THE RIGHT INSTANT TO TOTALLY CRUSH ANY CHANCE I HAD OF MAKING A MOVE ON HAZUMU..
?
OH, YOU WERE WONDERING ABOUT THAT, AHH? WELL, HAZUMU-KUN, IT'S--
SHOOP
Grrr...
MY, THAT DOES SOUND ODD. AYUKI-CHAN ALWAYS HAS BEEN A VERY SECRETIVE PERSON, THOUGH



Special #5 Secretive Ayuki-chan

Secret 1
The Secret of Her Arrivals

I SUGGEST YOU KEEP YOUR HACKING OF SPY SATELLITES TO A MINIMUM.
FSH
PI PI
YES, SIR...


HOW WEIRD!
WOW, SO IT IS ALL JUST CONCI-DENCE.

ABOUT THAT WINDOW AYUKI-CHAN STOOD OUTSIDE OF... WE'RE ON THE 4TH FLOOR, RIGHT?
EH...?
UM, HAZUMU-KUN...?

THE END

TH-THERE SHE IS!!
WHOA!!
IT'S HER!!!

WHAT IS IT, AYUKI-CHAN?
WHERE'D YOU HIDE 'EM?! COME BACK HERE AND 'FESS UP!!
THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING! LISTENING DEVICES!! HIDDEN CAMERAS!! SOMETHING!!!
LIAR!!!
COM-PLETE AND LITTER CONCI-DENCE. PAY IT NO MIND...

Secret 2
The Secret of Her Club

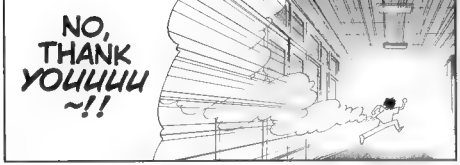
WOW, AYUKI-CHAN SURE IS MYSTERIOUS, ISN'T SHE?
UMMMMM
IS THERE AN "EXPERI-MENTS" CLUB...? MAYBE SHE'S IN THAT.
HUH? I THOUGHT SHE WAS IN THE CHEMISTRY CLUB.
SHE'S IN THE BIOLOGY CLUB, RIGHT?

Let's head back.
YEP.
SO IT TURNS OUT YOU WERE RIGHT AFTER ALL, YASUNA-CHAN.
WHA?!
HUMAN EXPERIMENTS CLUB
GAAAA-AAAHH?!!!
EVIL GRIN
THE END

FEAH! GPHEA AIPHEEA!
AHA! THAT WAY WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT CLUB SHE'S IN! GREAT IDEA, TOMARI!
FHAA AAH FOO PFHOO-INPH, FOMAFI-PHAAM?
IDIOT! THIS IS THE PERFECT CHANCE TO TAIL HER!
AHA!
EXPERIMENTS CLUB

Secret 3
The Secret of the Two of Them

WELL, YOU KNOW, IF YOU REALLY THINK ABOUT IT, SHE HANGS AROUND WITH ASUTA AN AWFUL LOT, DOESN'T SHE?
O-OH, REALLY? SO, ER, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN WONDERING ABOUT AYUKI?
ACK!
MAYBE SHE'S HIDING A CRUSH ON HIM...
WHAT?! SHE IS?!!
NO WAY! AYUKI CRUSHING ON ASUTA?!
hee hee hee
?
Hell no! Impossible!
OH, IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE WONDERING ABOUT? THERE'S NOTHING ODD TO IT AT ALL, REALLY.
AHH! THERE SHE IS!!



THE END☆

Omake ♡ NAMIKO'S SECRET ♡

CHEER UP, SENSEI! I'M SURE YOU'LL GET ONE SOME DAY.
NO, NOT EVEN A GLIMMER OF ONE.
MY DAYS AS A STUDENT WERE EMPTY AND BLEAK...
UM, WHAT ABOUT IN HIGH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE...?
AAHH! SORA-SENSEI!! ~!!
IF ONLY IT WOULD COME SOON! SOON!!
THEN I...! I, TSUKI NAMIKO, COULD...! WITH...! WITH...!
Whaaa...
BY THE WAY, THIS WAS HER PHYSICAL APPEARANCE DURING ADOLESCENCE.
CLK

Oh, woe... woe...
WELL... THEY SAY THAT EVERYBODY WILL HAVE A "POPULARITY PERIOD" AT SOME TIME IN THEIR LIFE, WHEN IT'S REALLY EASY FOR THEM TO GET DATES.
I HOPE SENSEI'S COMES AROUND SOON.
ME TOO.
MY TIME IS YET TO COME!! I WILL HAVE A "POPULARITY PERIOD"!! I MUST!!!
SOME PEOPLE NEVER HAVE ONE, ACTUALLY.
HEY!! WHO'RE YOU LOOKING AT?!
WHY'D YOU LOOK OVER THIS WAY WHEN YOU SAID THAT?!

Secretive Ayuki-chan
THE END

NO WAY!!!
THEN...
THIS MEANS THAT...
WHUD
YES. HER "POPULARITY PERIOD" ENDED BEFORE SHE REALIZED IT HAD BEGUN.
IT WILL COME SOON!! IT MUST ~!!!
SOON!!

Oniisan – This title literally means "big brother." First and foremost, it is used by younger siblings towards older male siblings. It can be used by itself or attached to a person's name as a suffix (-niisan). It is often used by a younger person toward an older person unrelated by blood, but as a sign of respect. Other forms include the informal "oniichan" and the more respectful "oniisama."

Oneesan – This title is the opposite of "Oniisan" and means "big sister." Other forms include the informal "oneechan" and the more respectful "oneesama."

TRANSLATION NOTES

■ **Page 18, Panel 1**
A *bokken* is a wooden katana, used in practicing kendo forms.

■ **Page 39, Panel 1**
Ikebana is the Japanese art of flower arrangement. It has a long history as one of the arts that women traditionally studied in preparation for marriage. Today, *ikebana* is still practiced at ceremonies and parties, and taught at specialty schools.

■ **Page 80, Panel 4**
Dango are sticky dumplings made from rice flour, often served three or four at a time on a skewer. They come in many different flavors and seasonings. *Koshian* is strained sweet-bean paste, and *Tsubuan* is sweet-bean jelly.

■ **Page 91, Panel 4**
The *jian* is a mythological Chinese bird that has only one eye and one wing. Two of these birds fuse together to become one whole bird. If one half should die, the other dies soon afterwards. They're considered to symbolize the bond between husband and wife in marriage.

■ **Page 166, Panel 1**
"Kashimashi" literally means "noisy" or "chatty." Ayuki is referring to an old Japanese proverb: "When three women gather, it's kashimashii." This saying is also where we get the title of this series from, the three women being Yasuna, Tomari, and Hazumu.

JAPANESE HONORIFICS GUIDE

To ensure that all character relationships appear as they were originally intended, all character names have been kept in their original Japanese name order with family name first and given name second. For copyright reasons, creator names appear in standard English name order.

In addition to preserving the original Japanese name order, Seven Seas is committed to ensuring that honorifics—polite speech that indicates a person's status or relationship towards another individual—are retained within this book. Politeness is an integral facet of Japanese culture and we believe that maintaining honorifics in our translations helps bring out the same character nuances as seen in the original work.

The following are some of the more common honorifics you may come across while reading this and other books:

-san – The most common of all honorifics, it is an all-purpose suffix that can be used in any situation where politeness is expected. Generally seen as the equivalent to Mr., Miss, Ms., Mrs., etc.

-sama – This suffix is one level higher than "-san" and is used to confer great respect upon an individual.

-dono – Stemming from the word "tono," meaning "lord," "-dono" signifies an even higher level than "-sama," and confers the utmost respect.

-kun – This suffix is commonly used at the end of boys' names to express either familiarity or endearment. It can also be used when addressing someone younger than oneself or of a lower status.

-chan – Another common honorific. This suffix is mainly used to express endearment towards girls, but can also be used when referring to little boys or even pets. Couples are also known to use the term amongst each other to convey a sense of cuteness and intimacy.

Sempai – This title is used towards one's senior or "superior" in a particular group or organization. "Sempai" is most often used in a school setting, where underclassmen refer to upperclassmen as "sempai," though it is also commonly said by employees when addressing fellow employees who hold seniority in the workplace.

Kouhai – This is the exact opposite of "sempai," and is used to refer to underclassmen in school, junior employees at the workplace, etc.

Sensei – Literally meaning "one who has come before," this title is used for teachers, doctors, or masters of any profession or art.

Kashimashi
~Girl Meets Girl~

VOLUME 5

story by Satoru Akahori art by Yukimaru Katsura
original character design Sukune Inugami

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